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ABSTRACT

This document presents an overview of the objectives, organization, and modes of university participation in the Fort Worth, Texas, Teacher Center. The Center was initiated with four objectives in mind: (1) to improve both participating schools and the education of teachers through field-oriented experiences; (2) to develop a viable educational enterprise involving a public school district, an educational service center, teacher training institutes, and the community; (3) to set up a plan for curriculum and staff development; (4) to develop a program for integrating the Professional Competence in Teaching concepts. The Center operates through an Advisory Council composed of representatives of the Fort Worth School District, Professional Teachers Association, classroom teachers, mayor's council, community members, higher education institutes, and student teachers. The Center serves in a cooperative capacity to improve teacher education through preservice and inservice meetings. University participation includes the placement of several hundred students in community classrooms in observation, volunteer worker, and teacher aide positions, and also through university classes meeting in the school buildings, utilizing local teachers as resource persons. Appended to the paper is a diagrammatic representation of the organization, membership components, and field activities. (MB)

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A BASE FOR BUILDING PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE: THE FORT WORTH TEACHER CENTER

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A BASE FOR BUILDING PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE:

THE FORT WORTH TEACHER CENTER

Introduction

In serving as the organizational structure for preservice and inservice education, the Fort Worth Teacher Center has the following objectives:

> To establish and develop a teacher center for the improvement of schools and education of teachers, both preservice and inservice, in a field oriented situation.
>
> To develop, organize and operate a viable educational enterprise involving a public school district, an educational service center, several teacher training institutions, and the community.
>
> To set up an operationalized plan for curriculum and staff development based on needs assessment priorities.
>
> To develop a joint program whereby the partners in the teacher center project can properly integrate the Professional Competence in Teaching concepts.

Under the organizational umbrella of the Fort Worth Teacher Center, programs have been implemented as a joint endeavor between the Fort Worth Independent School District, the Region XI Education Service Center, area teacher training institutions, and the community.

The Fort Worth Teacher Center has been a model for the teacher center concept. It has been recognized in

the State of Texas by the Texas Center for the Improvement of Educational Systems and has participated nationally in the Teacher Corps Project.

The organizational structure of the center and the cooperative planning of the participants serve as a model for the teacher center approach in building the professional competencies of preservice and inservice teachers.

Organizational Structure

The Fort Worth Teacher Center operates through an Advisory Council that is composed of representatives from the Fort Worth School District, including the Director of Teacher Education and the Coordinator of the Center, who is a non-voting member, the Presidents or their representatives from the Professional Teachers Association and the Administrators Association, six classroom teachers, the mayor's council representative, other community members, the deans from the six active higher education institutions, the Education Service Center and the two student teachers.

The Fort Worth Independent School District is the fiscal agent sharing a supportive system from the consortium members, Texas Education Agency and a federal grant. These funds include a federal grant through the Texas Center for Innovative Education Systems, now under the Texas Education Agency. This system delineates cooperation among the network centers. The school district con-

sortium support may be hard money or in-kind support through personnel or education programs that function in the district.

Other supportive funds include Senate Bill 8 funds, the FWISD inservice funds, higher education institutional funds, and benefits from other funds. The Senate Bill 8 funds allow the Independent School District a sum of $250 for each student teacher placed in the district. The district may retain $50 and the cooperating teacher is given $200. The $50 is to be used for a cooperative preservice and/or inservice effort upon council approval.

The Center functions through the Advisory Council that meets regularly, six or more times through the school year. An agenda is mailed in advance to all members who have an opportunity to add to the business of the meeting. Minutes are taken and mailed to those members who were not present. The Council takes such action as receiving proposals for changes or additional higher education course offerings that pertain to teacher education; preservice and inservice meetings planned as a cooperative effort through the Professional Competency in Teaching Committee, a sub committee of the Council; initiating action items or Coordinator of the Center; approving of management and administrative organization; and sharing the responsibility of the financial support and expenditures of the Center.

The Center includes any school that has a student from higher education for observation, field experience or student teaching. The Center has sites offering a variety of experiences; such as center sites for field training, staff development, instructional improvement and demonstration centers.

The Council has two sub-committees which are: Directors of Student Teachers and the Professional Competency in Teaching Committee. Both committees meet and develop programs or materials to meet the needs of the participants as indicated through either a formal or informal needs assessment.

The city has been divided into four areas. Each area has a Coordinating Council composed of administrators, teachers, college supervisors and student teachers. The area council will submit request or recommendations to the Centers Advisory Council for approval.

The institutions have selected one of the four areas for their student placements. The coordinator then makes tentative placements of students, using the ISD teachers who have signed a Letter of Agreement requesting a student and agreeing to certain responsibilities. The ISD Program Directors approve of the placements or suggest changes, the Coordinator then furnishes the placements to the institutions for final approval or changes. Principals

and teachers are notified of the placements.

The Center serves as a cooperative effort to improve the teacher education program through the preservice meetings and to retrain both the teachers and administrators within the ISD through inservice meetings. This cooperative effort that functions through the Center initiates innovative programs and strengthens the educational efforts where individuals are working under a common base. The results provide a better educational program for the pupils in the public schools.

University Participation

Area teacher training institutions play a major role in the development and implementation of the center. Not only are university representatives an integral part of the organizational structure and governing board, but are major working components in the schools within the Fort Worth community.

The Junior Observation Student Program has placed several hundred university students in the classrooms and community each semester. Students function in a number of roles from volunteer workers in community organization project to teacher aides in the classroom. This program has allowed preservice teachers to take a more active role in their professional development in the public school environment prior to student teaching. The ultimate outcome

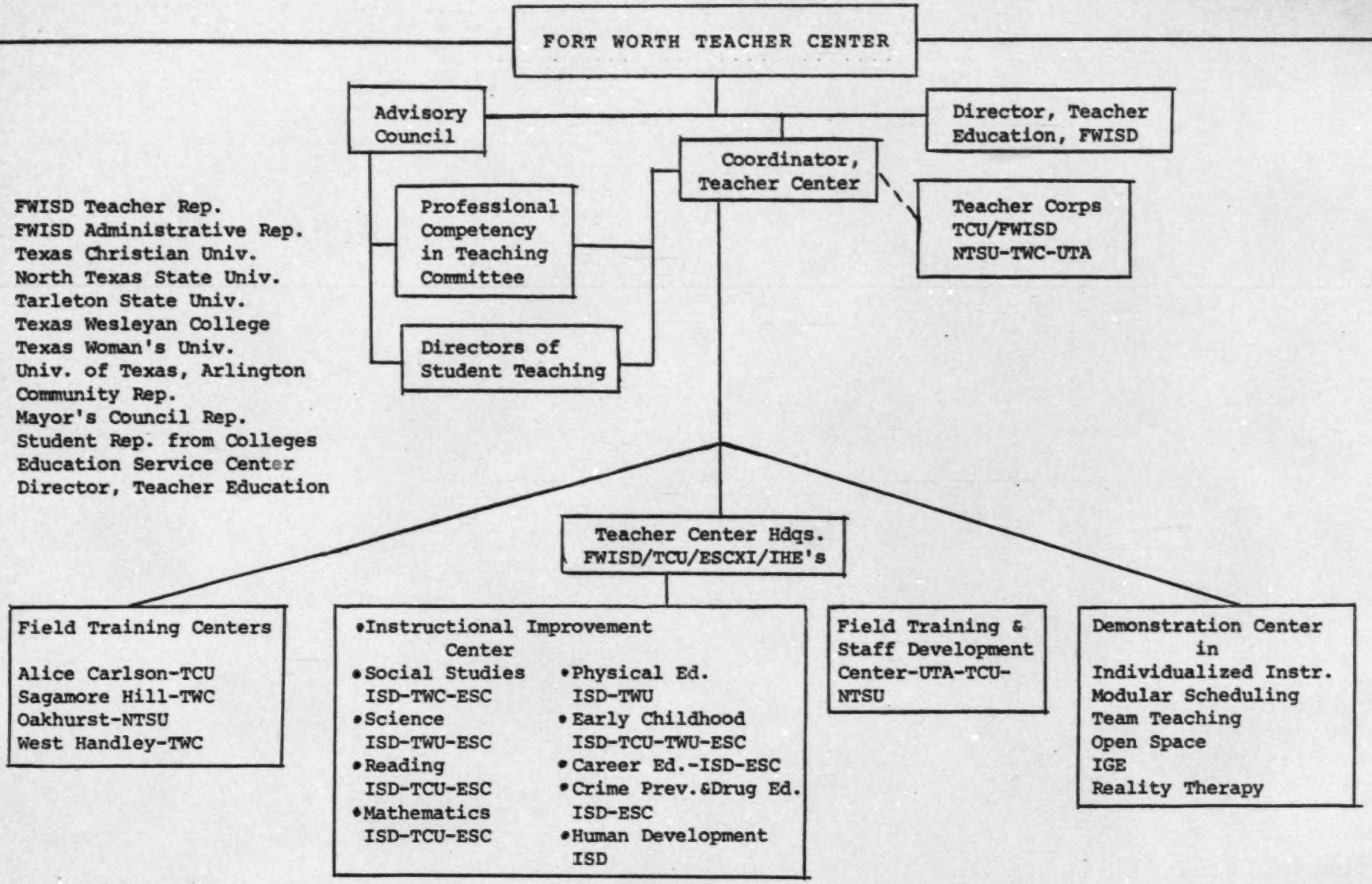
is to then place many of the junior observers in the school in which they worked as teacher aides.

Along with the Junior Observation Student Program, many university programs, particularly the University of Texas at Arlington has conducted university classes within the school buildings, using many of the teachers in the building as resources for the class. Secondary teachers participated in a ten hour training seminar before working with the methods students and student teachers from the U. T. Arlington program.

A unique aspect of the relationship between the universities and the teacher center is the accommodation of unique and distinctive components within the universities while maintaining common guidelines for all. An example is the uniform set of requirements and responsibilities for supervising teachers who work with student teachers. In a cooperative program, the universities and the Fort Worth School District have developed training programs for supervising teachers to assist them in understanding the uniqueness of each university program and in developing supervising skills for working with student teachers.

The Fort Worth Teacher Center has established the Professional Competence in Teaching Committee which is composed of university faculty and school district faculty and administrators. This group has developed several

position papers regarding teacher training and has made recommendations to the Advisory Council of the Center as to the implementation of competency based teacher education. The committee has also suggested guidelines to be used by the teacher center in working with preservice teachers from the universities and supervising teachers in the school district, including the clustering of student teachers to minimize the amount of travel time for university supervisors and to maximize the instructional improvement within a specific building.



A cooperative preservice and inservice effort of the total educational community of Fort Worth to serve:

Cooperating teachers | Student teachers | Classroom teachers | Principals & School Administrators | College Teacher Educators | Central Administrators